

Story 785 (1970 Tape 15)

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Location: Ece is from Erzurum Erzurum Province; but taping was done at Bursa

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### Heredity vs. Training

Once when one of the padişahs was traveling in dis-  
guise, he stopped one night at a <sup>throughout</sup> Türkmen<sup>1</sup> tent in a pine forest. The Türkmen did not know, of course, that he had the padişah as guest that night. He saw the padişah to bed and placed his son and daughter in the room with him as armed guards. "You watch at his feet," he told his daughter, "and you watch at his head," he told his son.

When the padişah awoke once during the night, he two young people guarding him. In the morning he asked their father, "Why did you give these children such a difficult task last night? You have very well-trained children!"

<sup>1</sup>The twenty-four nomadic Turkish tribes which settled in Asia Minor were originally called the Oghuz (Oğuz) Turks. After accepting Islam they were called Turkoman or Türkmen Turks. Those who continued to be nomadic kept the name Türkmen; those who became sedentary lost that name. In Turkey today the only nomadic Türkmen are the remnants of the Avşar people and the Yürüks.

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Türkmen replied, "It is not because of their training that they behave so well but because of their heredity, their origins."

The padişah said, "No, we all have heredity, but this was a matter of training. You have trained your children well."

argued for some time about this question. The Türkmen did not know that he was arguing with the padişah for the ruler was traveling incognito. Before he left the tent, he handed his host his calling card,<sup>2</sup> saying, "Take this card. If you should ever come to Istanbul, I shall expect you to call upon me."

Some time later the Türkmen said to himself, "I have a friend now in Istanbul. For a change in what I am doing, let me go and visit him." Putting some butter and cheese in a goatskin, after the Türkmen manner,<sup>3</sup> he set out for Istanbul.

When he arrived at Istanbul, he took out his card and showed it to people as he asked how to find the address on

<sup>2</sup>This is clearly an anachronism--a matter of acculturation.

<sup>3</sup>Avşars and Yürüks bring butter and cheese (their two principal saleable items) to town in the skins of black goats. One unaware of this might think they were carrying a goat's carcass. Since their entire capital is in flocks, a goatskin is a readily available receptacle.

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it. The various directions he received led him eventually to the palace of the padişah. There he showed the card to one of the palace guards. The man took one look at that card and recognized the emblem of the ruler. He said to the Türkmen, "The man you are seeking is not a grocer or anything like that. He is the padişah!"

"That is my friend, all right. Take me to him

The Türkmen was taken inside the palace and then into the presence of the padişah. After showing his guest the usual hospitality, the padişah had his specially trained cat bring coffee into the room for them. As they were drinking their coffee, the padişah said, "You once told me that it was heredity, not training, that counted most, but just now you saw how this trained cat brought us our coffee. It was trained to do that. It is training that is most important."

Again they argued for some time about this matter. Türkmen insisted on the importance of heredity. He said, "A cat is just a cat and has no heredity. I still maintain that it is because of their heredity that my children are clean and noble. A cat cannot be like that."

After they became tired of discussing this, the Türkmen requested of the padişah, "Give me a man to show me around this city. Have him show me the attractive parts

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of the city and the unattractive parts. Have him show me the flea market<sup>4</sup> as well as some of the better shops."

While he was passing through the flea market, the Türkmen bought a rat and tucked it into the very wide cloth belt<sup>5</sup> that he wore around his waist. He then returned to the palace. There he talked with the padişah for a while, and then he said, "I am tired, my padişah. Let us drink another cup of coffee served by that cat of yours before I leave."

The padişah agreed to this at once and ordered the coffee. When the cat entered the room with coffee, the Türkmen released the rat from his belt. The cat immediately dropped the tray of coffee cups and started chasing the

<sup>4</sup>The actual expression in Turkish is bit pazarı--louse market. This would have little meaning in English, and so we have converted the expression to flea market, an institution most English-speaking people will recognize. There is one major difference between the bit pazarı of Turkey and the flea market of the U.S., and that is that the former is often a place handling primarily secondhand clothing.

<sup>5</sup>Because the original baggy trousers (şalvar) for men seldom had any pockets, men often tucked small items into their cummerbunds. The cummerbund was once a standard article of dress. Today these wide belts are still worn by men in some parts of Turkey, mostly rural areas. Farmers and farmhands in the Gerede and Bolu area still wear them for purposes of health rather than looks. It is thought to be healthful to have the abdomen tightly wrapped. These cummerbunds are made of strips of cloth 10-12 inches in width and about 30 feet in length. This length permits the belt to be wound several times about the abdomen.

rat. When this happened, the Türkmen said, "You have just seen what can happen without heredity. It is an example that could be applied to a man or to a nation, for that matter. My children have good heredity, and that is why they guarded you carefully until morning without ever falling asleep. If I had not been able to depend upon their heredity, I should not have slept so well while depending upon others to guard you."

They ate and drank, and after that the Türkmen returned to his tent in the pine forest.